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SUBJECT: SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY (SHRD)  
REPORT: CHAD 2006-07

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¶1. Chad is a centralized republic with a population of approximately 10 million. The Government of Chad,s human rights record remained poor in 2006. President Idriss Deby has ruled the country since taking power in a 1990 rebellion. Political power remained concentrated in the hands of a northern oligarchy composed of the president's Zaghawa ethnic group and its allies. The Government staged a flawed referendum that removed presidential term limits from Chad,s Constitution in June 2005. On May 3, 2006 President Deby was reelected to a third term in a seriously flawed election that was boycotted by the opposition. The executive branch effectively dominated the legislature and judiciary, thereby eliminating potential challenges to a culture of impunity for the ruling minority. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of the security forces, elements of which frequently acted independently of government control.

¶2. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings; tortured, beat, and raped persons; practiced arbitrary arrest and detention; and continued to intimidate the public. The judiciary was subject to executive interference. Corruption was a serious problem. Violence and societal discrimination against women, including female genital mutilation (FGM), was common. Lack of respect for women,s rights and trafficking in persons (TIP), in particular of children, were serious concerns. The Government restricted freedom of the press by harassing and detaining journalists and, in the latter months of 2006, instituted formal censorship measures. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of the security forces, and there were frequent instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of government authority. Security forces committed or sanctioned serious human rights abuses. Chad continued to host more than 220,000 Sudanese refugees who fled the war and genocide in Darfur, 50,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and some 100,000 Chadians displaced by the inter-ethnic conflict. During the year, the security situation in the East grew increasingly tenuous due to spillover of the conflict in the Darfur region on the country,s border, and increased Chadian rebel activity against the Government that included a failed rebel assault on N,Djamena in April 2006

¶3. The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights in Chad focused on strengthening the institutions necessary for a stable and democratic Chad such as civil society and a free, fair and professional press. The United States focused on government institutions by promoting a more professional military, promoting transparency in governance, strengthening the National Assembly, engaging directly with key government officials, and improving interaction between the Government and human rights groups. Specifically, a budget-training workshop was held October 17-20, 2006 for 80 Chadian parliamentarians, and computers and office equipment were provided to improve the Assembly,s ability to control and monitor the government,s budget operations. Efforts were also made to strengthen the credibility and capacity of civil

society groups and governmental institutions in addressing human rights abuses, including involving them in visits of high-level U.S. government officials. The United States encourages human rights groups and other civil society organizations to become a resource for both the Government and Chadian people on human rights issues.

¶4. The United States also facilitated dialogue by creating opportunities for activists and government officials to interact in professional and social settings. To strengthen press freedoms and the media's ability to promote human rights and good governance, the United States provided equipment and training to print and broadcast journalists. Thirty private and public press organizations received material support including computers, generators, and motorbikes to enhance their ability to cover key events. Chadian journalists benefited from three training programs held in Chad, Nigeria, and Cameroon. The United States financed the creation of a private radio station in the far north, which has been broadcasting since February 2005, and promoted civil rights and civil liberties through a radio broadcast on human rights issues and civil liberties and civil rights education. This program was shared with other radio stations and translated into several local languages to help increase public awareness of basic human rights. In addition, the Embassy implemented a program to improve civic education teaching in schools by funding the printing of 35,000 locally edited civic education textbooks. The Ambassador continued to regularly highlight press freedom and other human rights issues with government and civil society officials and during public ceremonies. The Ambassador's Independence Day speech stressed the importance of free and fair elections as key to building viable democracy in Chad.

¶5. U.S. support for rule of law, good governance, and transparency included technical assistance to the Oil Revenue

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Management College, the mechanism that reviews projects financed by oil revenues in an effort to promote accountability. The Embassy selected a leading human rights activist, the President of the Chadian Human Rights League for the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) on human rights and good governance. In addition, a prominent Chadian journalist participated in the Edward R. Murrow IVP on investigative journalism and ethics.

¶6. Human rights activists and some officials acknowledged that strengthening the weak judicial system was critical to addressing human rights violations in a systematic and meaningful way. The Embassy also supported legal assistance for victims of human rights abuses through a local human rights NGO.

¶7. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Sudan deeply affected Chad. More than 220,000 refugees have sought safety in eastern Chad and some 100,000 Chadians have been displaced. The United States is the largest donor to the ongoing humanitarian efforts. The Embassy is an active participant in implementation of the Darfur Humanitarian Cease-fire Agreement, which includes regular meetings of a joint commission and contributed personnel to the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur. The Embassy remained a key interlocutor with the Government of Chad, the rebel movements, and the African Union on the Darfur peace process. The United States also facilitated the work of human rights organizations and NGOs working on protection issues for refugee women and children.

¶8. The United States continued to provide support for the rights of women and children. The Embassy supported the elimination of the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Support to a local NGO resulted in the drafting and enactment of a law that criminalized FGM. In 2004, the Embassy funded an education program, completed in 2006, to publicize and distribute copies of the law. In addition, Embassy officers hosted a child protection network that brought together concerned government officials, police and NGOs on a range of issues affecting children. Congressional visitors also met with the key officials and NGOs on women's issues.

¶9. The United States used direct contact with Chadian soldiers, including training and visits by U.S. officials, and the sharing of information on human rights violations with high-level government officials to emphasize the importance of working together on human rights. The annual U.S. publication of the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices was used as a basis for collaboration. To date, government officials have been candid and responsive. Visiting congressional and military delegations supported the U.S. human rights agenda.

¶10. The professionalization of Chad's security forces was a key component of the U.S. strategy for improving the country's human rights record. The United States funded International Military Education and Training and Counter Terrorism Fellowship programs at U.S. military facilities, where training on human rights is incorporated into the courses. The U.S. Special Forces trained 170 members of the Chadian military in 2006 and provided follow-up training to an additional 170 members initially trained in 2004. In addition, 18 senior government personnel received crisis management training and 27 Chadian police officers and immigration officials received anti-terrorism training in the United States.

¶11. U.S. Muslim outreach continued with a program for bilingual education with a respected local organization that promotes cross-cultural understanding. Two members of the High Islamic Council attended an IVLP on Leadership in the Muslim Community. The Embassy actively supported the Arabic media, including three radio stations, six newspapers, and a nightly television news show.

¶12. The United States supported Chad's efforts to combat TIP and child labor, bolstering the Government's efforts to protect victims of trafficking and enhance law enforcement's capacity to respond to trafficking cases. In 2006, the U.S. funded a UNICEF project to create a child protection network to carry out the rescue and rehabilitation of 1,500 child herders, 500 child domestics and 500 victims of commercial sexual exploitation, while also covering the production costs of a locally-made film that depicts the plight of child herders in Chad.

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